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MARRIAGE

581 The ordinary Nuer marriage is a union such as we understand matrimony to be in our own civilization, with this difference perhaps, that the Nuer do not consider the union to be complete till a child is born to it. As we have seen, a Nuer union of this kind is instituted by payment of cattle and the performance of nuptial ceremonies. It is to this type of union that I refer when I speak of marriage without qualifications; and when I use the word family in an unqualified sense I refer to the partners to such a union and the children born to the wife in the union (but not necessarily begotten by the husband). However, since the terms marriage and family are also used in this book in a qualified sense to refer to other unions and groups, I sometimes speak of a simple legal marriage and a simple legal family to avoid confusion or to point a contrast.

595 When a man marries two or more women there results a complex legal family, which we call a polygamous family, in which are comprised several simple legal marriages with the male partner the same in all of them. I discuss some of the features of polygamous marriages and families in the following chapter.† They present no immediate difficulties.

588 What seems to us, but not at all to Nuer, a somewhat strange union is that in which a woman marries another woman and counts as the pater of the children born of the wife. Such marriages are by no means uncommon in Nuerland, and they must be regarded as a form of simple legal marriage, for the woman-husband marries her wife in exactly the same way as a man marries a woman. When the marriage rites have been completed the husband gets a male kinsman or friend or neighbour, sometimes a poor Dinka, to beget children by her wife and to assist, regularly or when assistance is particularly required, in those tasks of the home for the carrying out of which a man is necessary. When the daughters of the marriage are married he will receive for each a 'cow of the begetting' and more beasts if he has played any considerable part in the maintenance of the home. We may perhaps refer to this kind of union as woman-marriage.

A woman who marries in this way is generally barren, and for this reason counts in some respects as a man. She acquires cattle through the marriages of kinswomen, including some of those due to uncles on the marriage of a niece, or by inheritance, since she counts as a man in these matters. A barren woman also often

†[cf. cat. 116, pp. 127 ff. -- Analyst]

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may have a byre if he is the eldest son of a dead man. When he is initiated into manhood his paternal uncles ought to build him a byre, 'so that his father's fire may be relit', and to hand over to him his father's herd which they have held in trust till he should take his father's place as head of the family.

The wife has her hut at the side of the byre, and in a polygamous family each wife has her own hut, where she and her children sleep. Near to it there may be a simple shelter for cooking. In a large homestead there may also be a hut for the youths of the household to sleep in, and perhaps a hut for the senior girls. The head of the family has no hut of his own but sleeps in the huts of his wives. In such a polygamous family all the huts of the wives are built around the byre, and this attachment symbolizes for Nuer what we call the agnatic principle of their society, which insists that all the sons of a man belong to his lineage irrespective of their maternal affiliations, their links with the kin of their mothers through the different huts within the homestead. Very early in life small boys are driven by their father or elder brothers away from their mothers' huts to the byre, the place of the menfolk of the family, where they eat, sleep, and spend the leisure hours of the day. When they are about seven or eight years of age they sleep there instead of in their mothers' huts, where the women and girls eat and sleep and near which they spend most of the day. The men and boys, to whichever hut they may belong, belong also, and primarily, to the byre and to its *gol*, a word which means, as I have earlier explained, the fire of cattle-dung kept burning day and night in the centre of the byre (there is sometimes a second one in the kraal) and its hearth; and also homestead, hamlet, family, household, and even lineage in certain contexts. Daughters belong to the huts and they will be married from them into stranger lineages, into which they are absorbed. Sons belong to the byre and to the lineage of its owner. This connexion between byre and lineage is seen when a new byre is built, for then the master of ceremonies of the family is summoned to make a libation of beer to the guardian spirits and ancestral ghosts of the lineage before its central support is planted, so that they may give peace and prosperity to all who dwell therein. In the byre, at the side of the hearth, is kept a branch, decorated with metal rings and pieces of skins of sacrificed beasts, which serves as an ancestral shrine. In summer camps a windscreen takes the place

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of the byre as the men's dormitory and club, and the shrine is placed at its entrance. Small grass beehive huts take the place of the wattle-and-daub huts of the villages as the dwellings of the womenfolk of the home.

The polygamous family is a unit, the *gol* of the husband of the several wives. '*Jigoala*', 'the people of my hearth', are my family in this inclusive sense. But the children of each wife also belong exclusively to her *dwil* (or *ut*), hut, and to her *mac*, cooking-fire, so that the polygamous family is divided into a number of separate domestic groups within the larger whole. The huts of the different wives are the centres of these elementary families which have a common husband and father. Outside her hut each wife has her *buor*, a mud windscreen, against which she makes her cooking-fire, and near to it is her *thung*, a plastered hole in the ground for pounding millet (she has another fire-place and another pounding-hole inside her hut for use on rainy days). This mud screen, the top of which is fashioned into three humps, is the sign of a married woman's status as the mistress of her home and the mother of children, just as the hearth in the byre is the sign of a man's status as the father of a family and the master of household and herd; and it also has ritual associations, for sacrifices are made near it. It is the centre of a married woman's life. Here her friends and neighbours gossip with her when she is working or in the evening when work is done.

As boys grow up they attach themselves more and more to the byre, but each remains, both in sentiment and by social alinement, also a member of his mother's hut. Hence one may distinguish between full brothers and paternal half-brothers by saying that the first are brothers *kwi dwiel*, on the side of the hut (as we say, on the distaff side), while the second are brothers *kwi luak*, on the side of the byre (as we say, on the spear-side); and this distinction is a fundamental one in Nuer society, for it runs not only through the family but through the kin also, and is moreover the paradigm of the lineage structure.

With the huts go the gardens, with the byre go the cattle and the kraal. Each wife has her own garden and granaries, and with her millet she makes porridge for herself and her daughters, small sons, and guests, and also porridge and beer for the men and boys in the byre, the male members of the whole household, only some of whom would be her own sons, and any male neighbours and

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595 guests who may be present. A husband may have a garden of his own, but, if so, he distributes the millet among his wives when their supplies are running short.

422 593 The cattle belong to the husband. It is the usual practice for a man to divide his cows among his wives, but they only have the use of them for milking and cannot dispose of them. A cow given to a wife is merely what Nuer call 'a cow of the churning-gourd', seeing that it is given to the wife only so that she may have milk for her little ones and butter and cheese to pour over her porridge. It is true that the husband ought not to dispose of the cow without consulting her, and I have heard a wife protest strongly that she had not been advised of her husband's intentions; but she cannot refuse her consent to its disposal for the benefit of the family. Nor can she dispose of it herself. When I asked some Nuer whether a wife could give a cow which she always spoke about as 'my cow' to her brother, they wondered whether I was joking: 'Could she do such a thing? Would not her husband kill her? Give one of his cows to her brother indeed! Eh he!' If a man dies, leaving only young children, and his wives remain in his homestead or live with his brothers, they continue to have use of the cows he allocated to them during his lifetime. A dying man may expressly direct that they should do so. However, the trustees of the animals are the dead man's brothers and their disposal is subject to the claims of the family as a whole and must be in their common interest. If a widow tried to remove the cows from the herd and take them to the home of her brother, or of some man with whom she was living in concubinage, her husband's kin would certainly not, except in very special circumstances, permit their dispersal, for the cattle belong to the lineage, to the sons as a whole, who are links between the ancestors and its as yet unborn members. If the sons are men when their father dies they ought to go on living together round a common kraal. Nevertheless, as will be seen, they frequently do not do so. Whether they do so or not, the cattle belong to all of them and should be used, when the herd is large enough, to obtain wives for them in order of seniority, though in practice they are sometimes a bone of contention. Even cattle which come to wives on the marriages of their kinswomen (the cow of the paternal aunt and the cow of the maternal aunt) are not their property in an absolute sense. They have the use of them and should their husband die their sons inherit them, but while the

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593 *kur wutni*, fighting with men. Also, a Nuer woman—a Dinka captive is not in so favourable a position—who readily accepts admonishment and correction for faults, would not submit to bullying but would return to her parents and brothers, leaving her husband without cook, dairymaid, and nurse, and therefore unable to maintain his home; and he might find it difficult to persuade her to return. If she does return it will only be after lengthy discussions in her parents' home and, as he is likely to have said something unpleasant about them in altercations with his wife, he may have to pay them a cow in compensation. Even if her father and brothers support her husband, he cannot prevent her from running away again, and this time to some distant relative who is unconcerned alike whether the bridewealth is returned or what the husband's grievances and discomforts may be. Should he [586] decide to divorce her and marry again, he has first to get his cattle back—it is always doubtful whether he will succeed in doing so—and he has then to face two or three years as a bachelor before his new wife comes to live with him. Therefore he will only take this step if his wife shows that she is determined to leave him, or if she is incorrigibly lazy, dirty, foul-mouthed, quarrelsome, or wanton, and occasionally if she is barren. Even if she has these defects he may, rather than go through the tedious process divorce entails, let her depart and bear him children by other men. A man will seldom divorce his wife for adulterie unless she is constantly unfaithful.

562 With rare exceptions, I found Nuer women well content with their station and that their husbands and other men treated them [681] with respect. In saying that their status in society is high I am judging not so much by the fact that the same number of cattle have to be paid for the homicide of a woman as of a man, and I believe more for a young woman in some parts of Nuerland, but by the part women take in the daily life of the community. They mix freely and with easy assurance with the men, and they do not hesitate to argue with them about matters in which they are interested as women. They have as intimate relations as the men with the cherished cattle, share with them the life of the kraal, and enter the byres when they wish to do so.

● 595 In a polygamous family the relations between husband and wife are complicated by the husband's relations with his other wives. *Nyak*, a co-wife, in its verbal form means both 'to be a co-wife' and,

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ominously, 'to be jealous'. The first wife has no special status, though the husband generally consults her more than the other wives because he married her first and started his home and family with her. On the contrary, Nuer insist on the equality of wives, and they recognize that custom of the home is intended to eliminate as far as possible friction between them. The wives generally cook in turn for the husband and the byre, and each cooks as well for herself, her daughters, and small sons; but it is also a convention that a wife shall frequently cook for the family of a co-wife and that the children of one hut may eat in any other hut. I was told that if there is any trouble between the huts this convention is unlikely to be observed. Nuer have told me also that some women, while they give food they have cooked to their co-wives, remove part of it before doing so and hide it for their own children to eat in secret; and there is even a word for this part. It is impressed on boys that when they bring fish or meat to the home they should not give it to their own mothers but to another of their father's wives. A man would never address one of his mother's co-wives as *'ciek gwar'*, 'my father's wife', but either as *'ma'*, mother', or by some honorific title; and she would reply *'gatda'*, 'my son', and not *'gat nyakda'*, 'son of my co-wife'. Indeed, there is the same kind of assertion, in the face of reason and experience, that *'ciek gur'*, 'your father's wife', is *'mor'*, 'your mother', as is made when Nuer say that *'gat gur'*, 'your father's son', is *'demor'*, 'your mother's son'; and the two assertions are different sides to the same dogma, to a further consideration of which I shall return. But though children are told that their father's other wives should not be treated differently from their mother, it seems to be acknowledged by all that there is likely to be jealousy between co-wives, especially if the husband appears to favour one wife or her children, and that it is a misfortune for children should their mother die and they be left to the care of a co-wife. Nuer say that this is what happened to *gukur*, the dove, and is the reason for its plaintive note *'giek ciek gur'*, 'bad is your father's wife'.

Before considering briefly relations between parents and children it is, I think, important to recognize that a Nuer child is not born into the family alone and then slowly extends his awareness to members of the household and kin, but is born into a wider circle than the family, in the sense that all those who share the homestead of the father and adjacent homesteads take an interest

595 in the child from the time the mother leaves her hut after bearing him. The father's other wives, his brothers and their wives, and other kinsmen and affines of the father if they live near him, take

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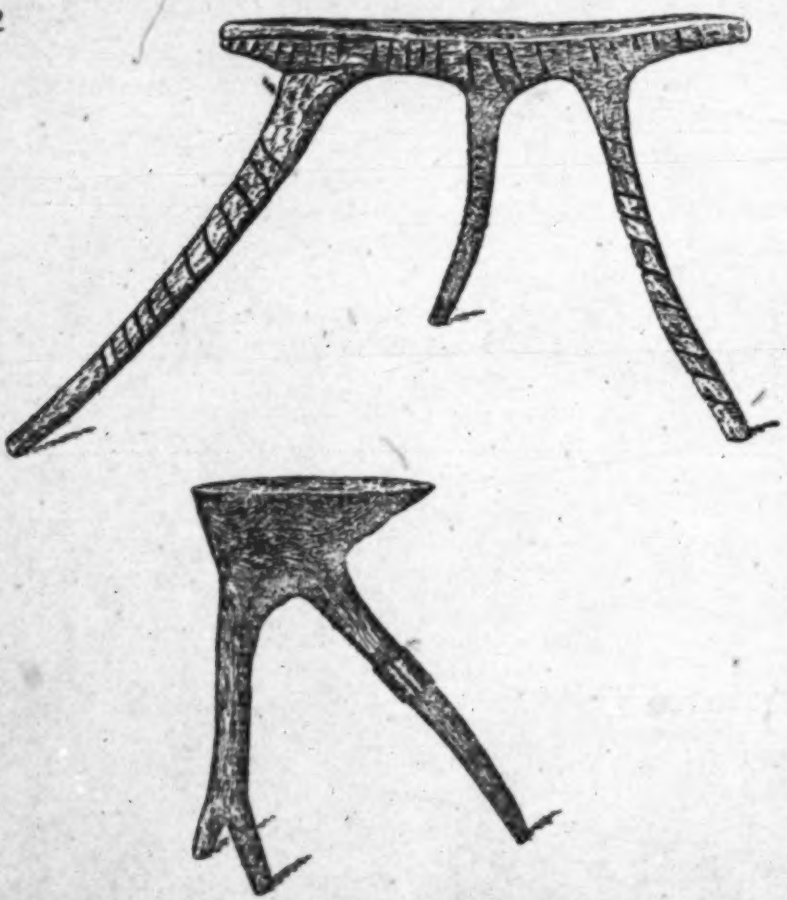

Wooden neck-rests or pillows

595 frequent notice of the child, nurse him, talk to him, and make him understand that they belong to him. If he is an eldest child and is brought up in his maternal grandparents' home, he will have the same close relations with corresponding persons there.

842 Nuer welcome children and hope when they marry that their wives will be fertile.

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593 structure towards the father's kin and lineage, and a pull of personal affection towards the mother's people. Rights in the herd, duties of blood revenge, and status in the community hold a man to his father's kin, but with these go jealousy about cattle, resentment against authority, and personal rivalries. A man has no rights in his maternal uncle's herd, he has no obligation to assist his maternal uncle's people in their feuds, and he has no hereditary status in his maternal uncle's community. But the fact that he lacks these rights and duties and status means that he is not burdened with the disputes and tensions they engender. The paternal ties are stronger, if there is a touch of hardness in them. The maternal ties are weaker and for this reason are tenderer. In the Nuer family the tension is greatest in the case of the eldest child, especially an eldest son, for both families more strongly assert their rights in him than in the younger children, but it is inherent in the nature of the Nuer family and has also a more general social significance in the counter-attraction of the lineage on one side and the wider society on the other.

• 595 This pull in opposite directions, towards the father's kin and towards the mother's kin, is most evident in polygamous families, where the sons of each hut have different sets of kinsmen on the mother's side. I cannot say what is the frequency of polygamy in Nuer society, and it would in any case be difficult, in view of the variety of Nuer domestic unions, to decide on a criterion of polygamy; but though monogamous marriage is much commoner, polygamy is frequent enough to have set its stamp, through its association with wealth and social influence, on the lineage system. The polygamous family is for the Nuer the ideal form of family life and every man would like to attain to it. It has therefore importance out of all proportion to the actual number of such families. The values and the whole conception of the lineage system are reflected in it.

613 A Nuer lineage is often named after a woman, its ancestress, because lineages are generally thought of as dividing out from within a polygamous family. They cannot be differentiated by reference to the name of the father of the founders of the different lines of descent, but only by reference to the names of the founders themselves or of their mothers. Thus the typical lineage structure is conceived of as being present in the structure of the polygamous family and in the distribution of huts in the homestead it occupies.

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593 582 with the cattle they receive in compensation for his death.' This is the final and, to a Nuer, most frightful sanction.

593 601 Nuer feelings about this matter are reflected in their use of kinship terms. Although '*demar*' (or '*gatmar*') means 'my uterine brother' and '*gatgwar*' is the term for 'my father's son' (paternal half-brother), they almost invariably use the term for the uterine brother to refer to, or address, the half-brother and keep the term for 'father's son' to speak about or address paternal cousins. To address a father's son by the term for this relationship is regarded as very bad form because it makes a cleavage in the family. It would be even worse to call your full brother '*gatgwar*', 'my father's son'. The term would only be used for this person as an affectionate meiosis. In the same way, a man must not address his paternal half-sister by the term for this relationship ('*nyigwa*'), for '*nyagur e jen nyimor*', 'your father's daughter (paternal half-sister) is your mother's daughter (full sister)'. It is true, as will be seen in the next chapter, that there is a general tendency for Nuer to use kinship terms for persons who stand in a more distant relationship to those which they denote and that the terms '*demar*' ('*gatmar*') and '*nyimar*' are freely used for almost any person of a man's own generation, but Nuer particularly emphasize the need for this displacement in the case of half-brothers and half-sisters. Nuer have told me that they are so anxious not to distinguish between full and half-brothers that should a man go with his half-brother to visit his mother's sister's home, the young men of that home will make a point of greeting the half-brother first and of addressing him as '*gatmar*', 'son of my mother', before addressing their true mother's sister's son by this term (which correctly applies to him and not to his half-brother). I have earlier noted that the wife of one brother is spoken about as the wife of all the brothers and her children as the children of them all.

595 593 But although Nuer are constantly asserting the solidarity of the polygamous family, it is as evident to themselves as it is to the observer that things are often different. They recognize that whereas full brothers pool their resources, helping each other even to the point of forgoing their rights, paternal half-brothers insist on their rights and try to avoid their obligations, doing for each other only what self-interest demands of them. Nuer are not surprised at—they expect—coldness between half-brothers, and disagreements and disputes between them, and between paternal

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cousins, are endemic in Nuer society. Quarrels between half-brothers are a frequent theme in stories of the separation of lineages and the dispersal of paternal kin. They are the 'bulls' of whom I said in Chapter I that each goes his own way and seeks to gather round himself a separate cluster of kin and affines. Even when there are no disagreements half-brothers tend to drift apart after the death of their father, especially after they are married, and go to live with their different maternal and affinal kin.

However, sons ought to continue to live together on the death of their father, and it is hoped that they will do so. If they live together there is less chance of unfairness in the disposal of the cattle and of resultant disputes. A man may anticipate difficulties of the kind by directing before his death how his herd is to be divided among his sons. If he does not do this, it ought to remain undivided till all the sons are married. What is left of it may then be divided among them at a family council. There is more likelihood of this being done if all the sons live together, for then, even though the herd is divided among the huts, it is still very much a single herd in a common kraal. When one of the brothers wants to marry, the different huts will all 'loosen cattle' for his marriage, as they would have done had the father been alive. But if a widow takes her sons to her own kin or to the home of a lover in a distant part of the country, the half-brothers who remain in their father's home are less inclined to help them when they want to marry, and if they have no uterine sisters they may then find it difficult to do so. Nevertheless, a boy without uterine sisters is to some extent protected by the rules governing division of bridewealth, which ensure that he will receive at least some of the cattle of the marriages of his paternal half-sisters. He will also receive cattle on the marriages of other female relatives: the daughters of his father's brothers and sisters and the daughters of his mother's brothers and sisters. He may possibly also receive *wang-nen* cattle of his grandparents. Though he lives apart from them, his half-brothers will not seek to deprive him of his rights in bride-wealth, even if they are not ready to help him by gifts from their own herds.

In discussing the shortcomings of half-brothers Nuer often further mention the obligation to marry a wife to the name of a man who dies without heirs. If he leaves behind an unmarried uterine brother, this brother will use the cattle brought into the

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592 death.) Yang ♂ cohabits with Nyabuk ♀—Riaagh ♂ who lives in his homestead. She is a widow of Thiac ♂—Jok ♂, of the Diany section. By her husband she bore Nyalani ♀ and by Yang ♂ she bore Nyawura ♀ [764] who was killed by lightning and is honoured by a ceremonial post in Yang's homestead, Jany ♂, Nyabiel ♀, Nyangir ♀, and two other children who died. Yang ♂ is betrothed to a girl but she has not yet borne him a child and still lives with her parents.

592 588 *Homestead No. XX.* Dhoal ♂—Cuc ♂ (a Dinka who was given Nuer kinship). He had relations with Gol ♀—Gek ♂, an unmarried girl, who bore him Rwac ♂. The mother is dead and the boy has been legitimatized by payment of a fee. He has recently been initiated in Dhoal's homestead. Dhoal ♂ now cohabits with Nyabiem ♀—Kan ♂, a widow of a man of the Jwal clan. She lives in Dhoal's homestead. After her husband's death Nyabiem cohabited with one of his kinsmen, Gany ♂—Bul ♂ to whom she bore Nyagac ♀, at present living with her mother. She came to live with Dhoal ♂ after separating from Gany and bore him Nyabilieu ♀ and another daughter who is still an infant. Dhoal ♂ also cohabits with Nyadhiac ♀ who lives in an adjacent homestead, No. XXIV, and has begotten several children by her; and with a young woman of the Dok tribe who has run away from her husband in Dok country and taken up her residence in Dhoal's home. She has not borne him any children but is said to be an excellent cook. As her husband's cattle have not been returned she is living in adultery with Dhoal but since she refuses to live with her husband and since she is a member of a distant tribe she counts as equivalent to a widow-concubine and is not counted as an unmarried concubine.

592 588 593 *Homestead No. XXI.* Nyadang ♀—Luk ♂ (of the Jikul clan). She is a widow of Dit ♂—Bicuk ♂ of the Keunyang section. Her only living child by her husband is Nyakwoli ♀. Two are dead. After her husband's death she cohabited with Baranyai ♂ of Homestead No. III. By him she bore a son, Galuak ♂, who lives with his genitor, twins who died, and another son, Bol ♂, who was drowned when crossing a river during flight from a Government punitive expedition. Owing to these deaths Nyadang's genealogy was more closely enquired into and it was discovered that she was distantly related to Baranyai. They thereupon ceased to cohabit and Nyadang took Nhial ♂—Tweth ♂, of Homestead No. XXIII, as a lover. She bore him Nyabilieu ♀ but left him because he used to beat her and she now cohabits with Mokwac of Homestead No. XVI. She has not borne him any children but "cooks for him". Nyadang's unmarried brother, Wal ♂—Luk ♂, lives in this homestead.

592 588 *Homestead No. XXII.* Nyagany ♀. She is barren. She was divorced by her husband, Deng ♂, a Lek tribesman, and then cohabited first with Mok ♂—Jang ♂, another Lek tribesman, then with a Rengyan tribesman, and at present with Mabil ♂—Wel ♂ of the village of Nyang.

592 595 *Homestead No. XXIII.* Nhial ♂—Tweth ♂ (brother of Nyadut ♀ of Homestead No. XVIII). He is Bor tribesman. He has two wives: Nyabath ♀—Lam ♂, a Jikany woman of the Gai section, by whom he has a small son; and Nyantual ♀—Deng ♂, a Jikany woman of the Gom

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section, whom he has recently wed. She still lives with her parents and has not yet brought the infant daughter she bore Nhial to his home. At one time Nhial cohabited with Nyadang of Homestead No. XXI. The byre in his homestead has fallen down and will soon be rebuilt.

Homestead No. XXIV. Nyadhiac ♀—Wal ♂, a widow of Galuak ♂—Thol ♂. She bore her husband Tap ♂ who lives in the homestead of Dhoal ♂ of Homestead No. XX.. Dhoal ♂ now cohabits with her and she has borne him Gai ♂, Puot ♂, Nyagwar ♀, Laoth ♂, Nyakwoli ♀, and a female infant. This cohabitation would be regarded by Nuer as leviritic concubinage because Galuak ♂ and Cuc ♂, the father of Dhoal ♂, were both sons of Thol.

Nyadhiac's mother, Nyaleeni ♀, a very old Baggara Arab captive, lives with her.

Homestead No. XXV. Kwol ♂—Kwoth ♂ (Kwoth ♂, Galuak ♂, and Cuc ♂ were brothers). Kwol is unmarried. His mother, Nyamani ♀—Kulanga ♂, a Bor woman, and his brothers, Buth ♂ and Duoth ♂, and his sister, Nyaliah ♀, live in the same homestead. He shares his cattle-byre with Nhial ♂, of Homestead No. XXIII, and two sons of Dit ♂, Rwot ♂ and Wecjok ♂ (Homestead No, XXVI).

Homestead No. XXVI. Nyaluak ♀—Yoah ♂, widow of Dit ♂—Bicuk ♂, to whom she bore Rwot ♂, Yangdoah ♀, Nyakur ♀, Nyampath ♀, and Wecjok ♂. After her husband's death she cohabited with Carou ♂—Gwec ♂ of Nyang village to whom she bore Nyibol ♀, Ging ♀, and Nyaduoth ♀. She is now past child-bearing. She is a noted diviner and magician. The byre of this homestead fell down last year.

The information collected about matrimonial conditions at Nyueny is not full enough to allow a very fine classification but a crude analysis in the form of a summary may be presented. There are thirty three women in the village who have either been married or have borne children. The number includes only women living in the village as their normal residence and not such women as Nyaudol ♀—Kwenwar ♂ even though she has declared her intention of settling there; nor the wife of Nhial ♂—Rainen ♂ because she has gone back to her own people and he is almost certain to divorce her; nor the unmarried woman who was living as Nhial's concubine because she was a bird of passage. I have not counted women, recently married by men of Nyueny, who are still living in the homes of their parents. These thirty-three women are living in the domestic conditions shown in the first column.

The second column presents an analysis of all the different types of union to which the thirty-three women are known, at one time or another, to have been partners. The second column does not pretend to the accuracy of the first for I did not attempt to record the complete domestic history of each woman, though much information about them was collected in the course of a general enquiry. It is hoped, nevertheless; that the second column will be of service in correcting any distortion in the first, for, except for unmarried concubines who have not been married and afterwards divorced, all the women have at one time lived in the union of one or other form of marriage. I have not attempted to estimate the number

582 in turn helps the brother just younger than he, and so on until all are supplied with the wherewithal to get married.

The oldest daughter in a family is likewise given in marriage before her younger sisters.

Should a man have children by two wives, if one wife dies, her son—even though he may be younger than the sons of the other wife—may be allowed and helped to get married before they do, the object being to supply him with a housekeeper as speedily as possible. His half-brothers are not supposed to be in as urgent need since they have their mother to cook for them.

593 After a wife goes to live with her husband permanently,
837 if he suspects that she is paying attention to any other man, he will probably beat her; or he may beat her for any other reason if he so desires. He finds his spiked bracelet specially useful at these times.

594 The greatest desire of a Nuer woman is for children. She realizes that as long as she can bear her husband children he will care for her. Should she fail him in this her position is insecure, and he, no doubt, will try to get another wife who will be able to give him his heart's desire. The mother also realizes that her children will care for
[595] her in her old age, even if her husband does take younger wives, so her children make her position in old age secure.

603 The oldest daughter (when several years of age) goes to live with her grandmother on her mother's side, providing her mother is the oldest daughter of her grandmother, or possibly this child may be the first grand-daughter. So the grandmother is assured of help in her old age.

CHILDBIRTH AND AFTER

843 One frequently wonders how babies do manage to live in Nuerland, when one considers how little care the mother receives at the time of their birth.

584 make the best of it now. When the family of the girl are willing to talk the matter over, representatives of her lover's family discuss the marriage payment with them and try to agree upon a suitable price. Usually some arrangement is made, and the man makes as large an initial payment as he possibly can, following it up by other payments as he is able.

682 Everything may go all right until the baby is born. If by any chance the mother should die and her death be considered as caused by the birth of the child, the father of the child is held to have caused her death. And serious trouble is on again between the two families. If a member of her family does not kill her lover, he *is* fined for her death.

But if she lives and the baby lives, all is peaceful and they may live the proverbial happy life ever after.

● 595 Likewise, a man may have a wife whom he has married, and one or more whom he has not paid for but who are his wives in reality and the mothers of his children. He keeps a house for each, and they are often good friends with his real wife, although they are never called his wives.

Thus a man may have children by his several wives, and it is quite common to ask children of the same father if they have the same or different mothers. Or one may ask children of the same mother if they have the same father, especially if their mother is an inherited wife.

587 When a man dies his wife is inherited by his brothers or other male relatives. In case they do not want her, she may be returned to her father's village and the cattle paid back.

586 Divorce is not unknown in Nuerland, but it is usually caused by the lack of children. If a wife cannot bear a child, or fails to bring living children into the world, the